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**File Code:** 2350; 1950  
**Date:** January 19, 2018

Dear Interested Party:

The Bradshaw Ranger District, Prescott National Forest, is seeking your comments on approximately 62 miles of motorized trails and 1 trailhead proposal in the greater Prescott area to improve trail access and address natural resource concerns. The trail proposals include reroutes, changes in status, adoptions, and new construction. The trailhead proposal primarily addresses the need for an expanded and relocated trailhead for providing access to the proposed Sevenmile Gulch trail system. For more detailed information and maps, go to <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=53205>.

## Background

Starting in 2008, the Prescott National Forest engaged individuals, local trail user groups, and various local governments in developing a recreation strategy for Central Arizona that focuses efforts on building and maintaining sustainable recreation infrastructure. The need for additional trails and trailheads was highlighted by those involved in this process, and community partners worked with the Forest Service to develop sustainable trail proposals for the greater Prescott area. Since 2013 annual meetings as well as project specific meetings have been held to gather input from all interested publics through the Greater Prescott Trails Planning process. This proposal is a direct result of that process and is considered part of the mid-term implementation projects.

Under the June 2015 Prescott National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, we desire infrequent conflicts between recreation uses; multiple recreation opportunities; support of community based and Prescott NF based recreation opportunities; balancing motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities; providing trail systems with interconnecting loops, as well as trails that connect communities or other destinations; use of designated trails by visitors and citizens; and “unofficial” (unauthorized) trails are not evident in the Prescott Basin Management Area.

To be sustainable, we will evaluate the social, economic, and environmental implications of projects, and favor proposals that create resiliency in these three core areas. This project fits within the Prescott National Forest’s sustainable recreation goals by providing improved access and opportunities for trail users on the forest while addressing social, economic, and environmental factors. It is economically sustainable because we anticipate construction and maintenance to be completed primarily by volunteers and grant funding. Additionally, creating more access points and trail loop opportunities will enhance the draw to this community and facilitate potential event opportunities. Creation of a well-designed trail system makes this project environmentally sustainable by significantly reducing soil erosion and providing for more effective and efficient long-term management of trail use in the Prescott area while restoring the



natural ecosystem. This project is socially sustainable as it is the culmination of a collaborative process developed and supported by diverse recreation user groups; is intended to reduce trail user conflicts by providing more opportunity and spreading out use across a larger, more connected trail system, thus improving the quality of life for local residents and other visitors.

### **Existing Condition**

The Prescott National Forest contains approximately 900 miles of trail; 400 motorized and 500 non-motorized. These trails provide a variety of recreation opportunities for forest visitors from primitive to highly developed. The Bradshaw Ranger District has a total of about 475 miles of trail with 106 miles designed for single track multiuse motorized, 123 designed for 50 inch and less multiuse motorized, and 246 miles of non-motorized trails primarily designed for Pack and Saddle use but used by all non-motorized users.

Several reasons have compelled the District to consider these trail additions, reroutes, and trailheads to the official trail system. Primarily the process has been driven by public and partner involvement and the demonstrated need for more diverse trail opportunities. Of the 62 miles of trail proposals, approximately 44 miles exists in some form today. A large portion of the proposal centers in the Sevenmile Gulch area and Walker Corridor, where demand is high as evidenced by numerous “non-system” or “social” trails. These unauthorized trails develop as a result of frequent visitor use and/or through unsanctioned construction by forest visitors. Additionally, this area offers opportunities for multiple levels of use (beginner, intermediate, advanced) and has been heavily used for single track (motorcycle), mountain bicycling, hiking, and horseback riding for decades.

Some of these unauthorized trails lack the benefit of a good design that considers the impact to the natural and cultural resources, as well as the safety and sustainability of the trail. Poorly designed trails tend to channel water or serve as drainages, contributing to soil erosion. Well-designed trails account for drainage, soil types, the type of user(s), and provide logical connections, thus improving the sustainability of a trail system for the long term. It is believed that the proposed trails and trailheads will enhance resource protection, provide for ecological restoration through reduced erosion, and enhance long-term management.

The unauthorized trails being considered in no way sanctions the unauthorized construction of trails by individuals or groups. No person should infer from this proposal that future unauthorized trails will be considered for adoption. Constructing unauthorized trails is punishable as a Class B Misdemeanor under Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations 261.10(a) with a maximum penalty of \$5,000 or six months imprisonment. If you have a specific idea for a new trail, or would like to volunteer to construct and maintain trails please contact Jason Williams, Forest Trails Manager at 928-777-2220 or [jwilliams12@fs.fed.us](mailto:jwilliams12@fs.fed.us).

### **Proposed Action**

This proposal would improve the Forest trail system in the Prescott Basin and neighboring areas by approving the adoption of 13 miles of unauthorized trails with reroutes to address natural resource concerns; construction of up to 49 miles of new trails; and the creation of 1 new trailhead and decommissioning of 1. This process will also decommission at least 36 miles of unnecessary unsustainable, and duplicate trails, some of which are unauthorized.

The primary purpose for action is to provide additional trail opportunities, trail connections, reasonable access points, and reduce or limit resource damage and disturbance. Reducing or limiting resource damage on trails is completed by using sustainable design and construction methods. Generally this is accomplished by designing sections of trail that follow the natural contour of the terrain and use reversals in grade (undulating the trail surface) to achieve drainage for water. This typically makes trail segments longer and more moderate for the user, significantly reduces erosion, and allows for long-term maintenance costs to be reduced.

This proposal is for 27 miles of trails designed for ATVs 50 inches and less and 35 miles of trails designed for motorcycles. All ATV designed trails would be considered multiuse and allow use by all other motorized and non-motorized users. The proposed trails would provide critical connections between trail systems, allowing non-street legal motorized users long-distance routes around the city of Prescott. These routes would also provide long distance routes for other users seeking extended loop opportunities.

The single track motorcycle trails in the Sevenmile Gulch area will be built and maintained primarily for motorcycles, but will allow other uses that are compatible. Compatibility or the need for use restrictions will be considered in this analysis.

Construction will be completed by volunteers, forest personnel, and/or partner organizations. Construction methods could include hand tools or mechanized equipment to create an 18-36 inch wide trail tread for single track trails and 50 inches wide for the OHV motorized. Obliteration of old sections of unsustainable unauthorized trail, adopted through this process, and restoration of gullies on fall line trails will be achieved through covering the disturbed area with brush, rocks, and logs to prevent further erosion. New construction will follow the natural contour of the terrain and use reversals in grade. Some of the trails in the Sevenmile Gulch area will be routed over rock and advanced trail armoring techniques will be used to stabilize these trails while still providing for challenging opportunities. These actions will allow for more natural hydrologic conditions. Signs indicating "restoration in progress" will be installed to ensure old trail segments are not used. It is expected that maintenance of proposed trails will be completed through a combination of volunteers, partners, grants, and Forest Service trail crews. Trail maintenance costs will range from \$200-\$2,000/mile depending on sustainability of design and brush component on the individual trails. Maintenance of newly designed trails vs. old poorly designed trails is expected to be significantly less and on average may be around \$500/mile when averaging out the brushing needs.

Details on individual trail proposals and trailhead proposals are shown on the maps located on the project web page at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=53205>. Maps for this project are listed below.

1. Greater Prescott Trails Midterm Project #2 Overview
2. Sevenmile Gulch Detail
3. Subarea A (no current proposals)
4. Subarea B
5. Subarea C
6. Subarea D

The Bradshaw District Ranger will decide whether to implement the proposed action, a modified

proposal based on comments, or take no action at this time. Our preliminary assessment is that there are no significant impacts that would require an Environmental Impact Statement.

If a decision to proceed with this proposal is made, the estimated implementation date for this project is spring 2019 thru summer 2024.

We would like to know of any comments, issues, concerns, or suggestions you may have about this proposal. **A public meeting on this proposal will be held at the Boys and Girls Club, 335 E Aubrey St, Prescott, AZ 86303 on February 5, 2018 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm.**

Comments should be as fully formed and specific as possible to assist us in the analysis. Although comments are welcome at any time, they will be most effective if received by **February 20, 2018**. In order to have standing for objections, comments must be received by February 20, 2018.

This project implements the Prescott Forest Plan and is not authorized under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA). The project is subject to the objections process at 36 CFR 218, subparts A and B. Only specific comments received during this or any other official comment period provide standing for objections. Comments must meet the requirements of 36 CFR 218.8.

Comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official to consider (36 CFR 218.2). To comment on this proposal, please go to the project web page at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=53205> and click on the link "comment/object on this project" on the upper right side of the page. Attachments may be submitted in .doc, .docx, .pdf, or .rtf format.

Or you may submit comments in writing to:

Greater Prescott Trails – Mid-Term 2 Project  
Prescott National Forest  
344 S. Cortez St.  
Prescott, AZ 86303  
Attn: Susan Johnson

If you have any questions, please contact Susan Johnson of the Prescott National Forest at 928-443-8075, or email: [sajohnson@fs.fed.us](mailto:sajohnson@fs.fed.us).

Comments received in response to this scoping letter, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this project and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address

within thirty (30) days.

Thank you for your interest in the management of the Prescott National Forest!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Tomsky', with a stylized, flowing script.

SARAH TOMSKY  
District Ranger